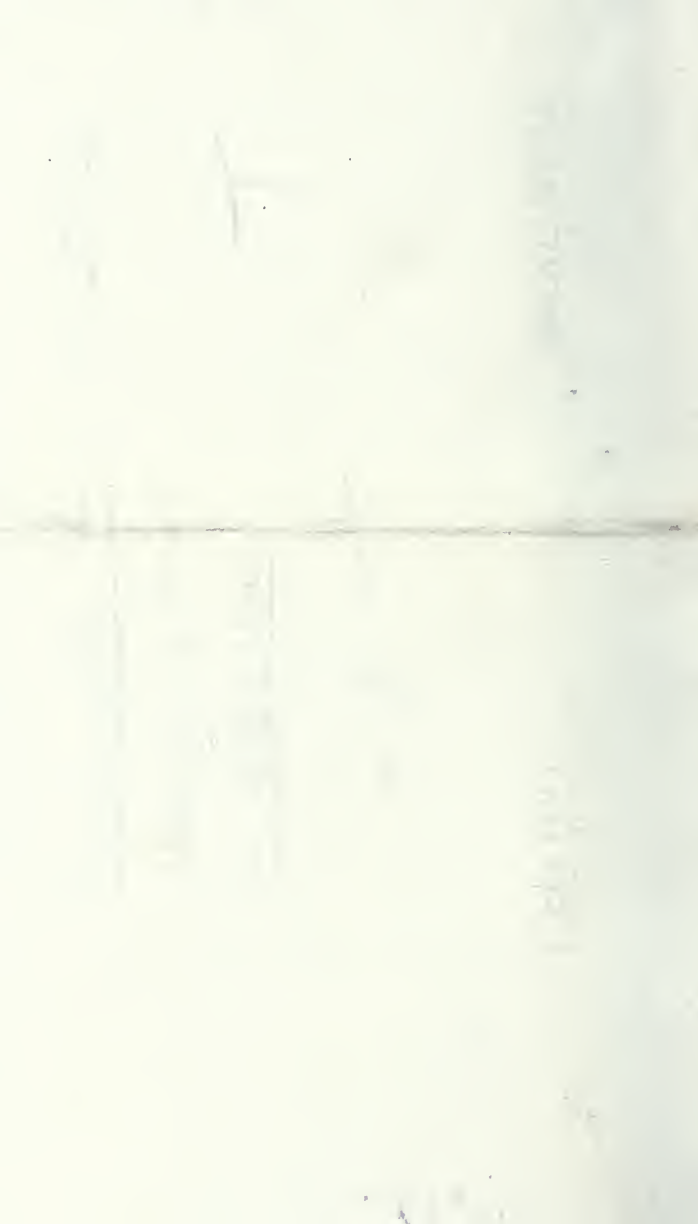


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on S. Joy & John Gott —

A FEW WORDS

ABOUT THE

Church in Bramley,

BY

A CHURCHMAN.



PRICE TWOPENCE.



BRAMLEY:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN DAWSON,
POST OFFICE.

—
1871.

THIRD EDITION.

“Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as oothers see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress and gait wad lea'e us,
And even devotion.”

BURNS.

A FEW WORDS

ABOUT

THE CHURCH IN BRAMLEY,

BY A CHURCHMAN.

AS the title of this pamphlet intimates, I am a churchman, and may therefore be considered free from that prejudice and jealousy of the church, to which, had I been a dissenter, these remarks might probably be attributed. I am, moreover, not only a churchman in name, but in principle, in belief, and in feeling. I say feeling, because there is a tone, if I may use the expression, about the church, which those surrounded by her influences cannot fail to catch, and which becomes deeper and more decided as the intimacy grows closer, just as objects within a church receive a colour and a tone from the light which streams through her painted windows, gorgeous with old heraldry, or with the pomp and glitter of Eastern costumes. I love the Church. Her history is intimately connected and interwoven with all that is great and noble, venerable and enduring, in the annals and literature of our country. Her liturgy has immemorial usage to recommend it, and her doctrine the blood of martyrs, while her sacraments have administered comfort and hope, consolation and peace, to the great and good in all ages. Her outward and visible manifestations as a church, the imposing grandeur and beauty of her edifices, and the impressive solemnity of her services, are no less worthy of our admiration and love, while from her loins have sprung a class of men, which for qualities of head and heart have

never been surpassed, and who have left behind them a theology whose greatest praise is that it is as well known to dissenters as to churchmen. I love the church, then, in general, but Bramley Church I love in particular. My earliest recollections of a place of worship are of this church, I was baptized in it, I received my first communion in it. I have been intimately connected with it for more than twenty years. I received the first rudiments of learning in its day schools, I have attended its Sunday schools and night schools. I have frequented its services regularly, and am a member of its communion. I have a faint recollection of FURBANK, I knew DIXON and his family well, I knew NASH, and MENSE, and MACKENSIE, I knew GREAR and GAMBLES, I knew JOY and ROGERS and SMITH, and I am well acquainted with Messrs. GOTT, SEPPINGS, COPE, DEVAS, GASKELL, and LISTER. I have joined heartily and assisted cheerfully in any work for which my labors have been asked. I have lived on terms of friendship and familiarity with all my spiritual pastors and masters. I highly esteem and respect those, without exception, who are now ministering amongst us, and yet I feel called upon to chastise them severely, I feel it my duty to expose their faults and failings, their weaknesses and follies, fearlessly to themselves and to their parishioners; to criticise their labours amongst us rigorously, but with justice and fairness, in fact, not to spare the rod, lest I spoil the child, and all this not because I have a grudge against the church or her ministers, but because I love them too well, I am too proud of the position of the Church in this town, to see unconcerned her light gradually dying out, and her influence for good slowly but surely declining.

The history of Bramley Church is remarkable. Those who compare her, visibly and spiritually, as she was twenty years ago, with what she is now, cannot fail to be struck at the contrast. An unsightly building, (a barn, if you like, or an old maltkiln, trying to pass itself off as a church), topped by a spire, which always looked as though it had just dropt from the clouds, into a very precarious position, on the summit of a gable, where it perched like

a weathercock, in great danger of being blown down, or of slipping off the end into the churchyard of its own accord. An interior, which in point of architectural beauty and design, was in excellent keeping with the outside, but whether it was Early-English, Decorated, Perpendicular, Gothic, or Norman architecture, I leave it for those who are better acquainted with such matters to determine. Our own opinion is, that it was very Early-English, contemporaneous with the mud huts and Druidical Temples of the Ancient Britons, though an inscription inside seemed to intimate that it had once been Decorated. Be that as it may, there were not many decorations in it at the time I am writing of, except what the rain had made, which in wet weather would run down the inside walls in cataracts, bringing down the cobwebs in its course, and creating the liveliest consternation in the camps of the spiders and slugs, who came issuing out in family groups, wondering what was the matter. To obviate this slight inconvenience, and to cover up the marks which the rain had left on the walls, a brilliant idea seems to have struck some enterprising churchwarden ambitious to have his name handed down to posterity, for presently the pews and galleries not only appeared clad in a new coat of varnish, but the walls were actually papered from top to bottom. I have heard that an oratorio was once performed in this church, whether it was in honor of the church being papered I do not know, but this is certain, that to the very last an inscription in gold letters occupied a very prominent position in front of one of the galleries, to the effect that "This Church was beautified and embellished," in such a year, I forget the year, Timothy Skinflint, or some such person, Churchwarden. The Church was papered when I first knew it, that is, the paper was partly off, and partly on, and in damp weather, smelt to such a degree, that it was difficult to say which was the most offensive, the bones of the dead interred in the Church, or the paper that hung rotting on the walls. The pews were of all sizes and shapes, from a small drawing room constructed to accomodate twenty persons, to the weest and most miserable little box with a seat for

one in the corner,—and faced about to all points of the compass, so that when you entered a pew, you never knew whether you would sit with your face or your back to the parson, or whether the people in the next box would be sitting with their faces or backs to you. I remember the first pew I sat in, in the old church, was of this description. It was in the body of the church, and near the pulpit. We sat with our backs to the pulpit, and our neighbours in the next pew with their faces. As may be supposed, when we stood up to sing, our noses were nearer together than was at all agreeable, especially as our neighbours were a couple of old women, and smelt as strong of tobacco as the church did of old bones. Of the choir and service, it is only fair to say they were an advance upon the old duett between parson and clerk, which was at this time still the orthodox form of service in many country places. In fact, Bramley Church, with its choir and its organ, would no doubt be considered going fast on to popery then, as it is now. In those days songs and anthems were performed during the service with impunity. It was in these that Miss Walker gained her first laurels. Her rendering of “Angels ever bright and fair,” was considered perfection, and was not to be excelled even by Mistress Sunderland herself, so the Bramley people said, and they are proud of their favourite even yet, to whom they used to listen with such delight, but who has since drawn larger audiences than ever assembled to hear her in Bramley Old Church.

The spiritual edifice was in the main as mouldy and rotten as the material one. It consisted of a few half-starved souls belonging to old men and women, whose ideas were as ancient as the church, and as unalterable as the Laws of the Medes and Persians, who looked upon the then state of things as perfection, and never dreamt of anything better. Their pockets were as narrow as their minds, and their hearts as shrivelled as their faces. The average congregation, on fine days, was about fifty, and the average collection, about as many pence, with a small sprinkling of threepenny pieces. As it is now, so it was then, those who had most gave least, and those who

occupied the best pews and made the most display, passed as nabobs and grandees, though in reality, a many of them were nothing more than church-mice.

There was one person however in connection with the old church, upon whom the mind of every churchman who knew him, must delight to dwell. One for whose sake I would fain think well of the old edifice, to which he lent for so many years such dignity and splendour. Five feet eleven and a half, in his stocking feet, of a form robust and portly in the extreme, hale and hearty in constitution, a countenance beaming with satisfaction and good humour, and a mind that loved its work, and knew how to do it, old GAUNT was an honor to the church that enjoyed his services. He was a model beadle, both in appearance and manner, and the efficiency with which he discharged his duties. To see him in his laced coat, knee breeches, black silk stockings, and silver buckled shoes, trotting up the aisle after the parson, first to the altar, then into the vestry, then out again into the pulpit, and such a pulpit, three stories high, to see him close the door, and then survey from the top step the whole church from gallery to gallery, from ceiling to floor, then the slow and dignified descent, was a sight once seen to be long remembered. After the death of his first wife, when he had both household duties and church duties to attend to on the Sunday, after seeing the clergyman snugly settled within the communion rails, he might have been seen, as regularly as the Sunday came round, to walk quietly out of church, as though he was going to moralize among the tombs, but he was only going to his own home round the corner, to set the potatoes on for his Sunday dinner. At the Christmas parties in the schools he was the presiding genius, and generally appeared in full uniform. He was as fond of the "cup which cheers but not inebriates," as Dr. Johnson himself, and was as jolly with the living as with the dead. I remember well on one of these occasions, him being pressed to take a piece of matrimony-cake, which he at length did, but said, he "sud want another cup o' tea to wesh it daan we," and he had then drained as many tea-pots as other

people had cups. On Christmas day no face was more welcome than old Gaunt's, and no Christmas box was more gladly or deservedly bestowed. Poor old Gaunt, he was sometimes almost gone when he arrived at the last house or so. He would come toddling in, his face brim full of good humour and good cheer, and to the usual salutations, and "your jolly to-night, Gaunt," he would give you the most comical look imaginable, as he replied "i, ye see, they will mak ma ev a drop at ivery haase I call at, an it adds up t'ards neet, I can't carry sa mich." He was the representative of a class of men, and an office fast becoming obsolete, the parish beadle. He was part and parcel of the church, and he passed away with the church, but his name will not be forgotten by the present generation of Bramley people.

Such was Bramley Old Church, when a young man appeared upon the scene, who was destined for a time to revolutionise the church, and religious feeling generally in this town. As a curate of the Leeds Parish Church under Dr. Hook, he was already favourably known to many in Leeds as a zealous, able, and pious minister of the Gospel. No one, perhaps, knew his abilities, his piety, and the sterling qualities of his character, better than the old Doctor himself, whose disciple he was, and between whom there existed a mutual attachment and esteem. The old Doctor was proud of his pupil, and the pupil lov'd and revered the fine old man, who had done for Leeds what his pupil has since accomplished for Bramley, raised up the church like a beacon light, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of all true churchmen. One of the last and best acts of Dr. Hook, while Vicar of Leeds, was the appointment of Samuel Joy to the Bramley living, vacant by the resignation of Mr. Dixon.

On Palm Sunday, 1859, Samuel Joy commenced his work in this parish. He made little stir at first. Quiet and reserved in his manner and disposition, cautious and unostentatious in his proceedings, he was not one to make sudden changes, to take the town by storm, and turn everything upside down. He was content to feel his way

for a long time at the first, to follow the tracks of those who had preceded him until he knew his ground, and the character and feelings of his parishioners. Slowly, but surely, he made his way, gathering knowledge and experience of his work as he went along; and gradually winning the sympathy and affection of his parishioners, by the quietness and gentleness of his manners, and the depth and fervor of his piety. People watched him narrowly at first, to see how he went on; then they began to talk about him, (famous talkers about other folks are the Bramley people), then they went to hear him, and at last they learned to respect and love him. Churchmen who had never been to church before, began to go now. Churchmen who had gone to church, as a matter of course, merely because they were churchmen, on principle, now began to like the church, to take an interest in her welfare, and to attend her services regularly. People who had before contented themselves with one service on the Sunday, and who were glad to have an excuse for staying in at night by letting their servants go, now saw no objections to locking their houses up, and going to church twice a day. Those who before came very rarely, were now observed to come very often, and men and women, and children too, who were known never to have been in a place of worship before, came for the first time to the church to hear Mr. Joy, because he had been and asked them, a thing which no parson in Bramley had ever been known to do before to their knowledge. Even dissenters began to exhibit a little curiosity to hear the new parson whom everybody was talking about, and occasionally thorough-going Baptists and Wesleyans, who had lived within sight of the church all their lives, but never been in, now ventured to come, and thought it was not so bad after all. At length it became known that Mr. Joy had been brought up a Wesleyan, that his father and mother had been staunch Wesleyans all their lives, that he had been educated at a Wesleyan college, by a Wesleyan minister, that some of the family were still Wesleyans, in fact, that Mr. Joy himself was a Wesleyan in disguise, and only wanted an invitation to preach in their chapel,

and he would only be too glad to do so. Some of my readers may perhaps think I am here drawing a fanciful picture, but, I assure them, that a Wesleyan of Wesleyans, a very prop and pillar of the church, really did talk in this way to the writer of this pamphlet; and not only thought it would be a good thing for Mr. Joy to come and preach in their chapel, but was equally desirous that their parson should preach in the church, and thus change and change about. So thoroughly did some of the Dissenters entertain the idea that Mr. Joy was a Wesleyan at heart, that soon after he came, some special services having been arranged among them, to meet some passing evil, I think it was the Cattle Plague, but am not sure about the object, that a deputation of ministers of other denominations did him the honor to wait upon him at the Parsonage, to invite him to join them. Of course he declined, upon the plea, I suppose, that the church had her own special times and seasons for humiliation and penitence, and special prayers to meet every emergency.

As might be supposed, the congregation soon began to increase. First one new face made its appearance, then another. Old church families who had not been to Bramley Church for years, began to put in an appearance again. Pews, which had long been at a discount, now rose to a premium, were rapidly taken, and regularly occupied. Old Mr. Musgrave, who owned a many of the pews, thought things were looking up in the church, got his best suit of clothes brushed up, and appeared regularly under the pulpit in a blue coat with gilt buttons. Old sinners and young sinners, who had led open and profligate lives, were now observed to abandon their old haunts and evil ways, and appear regularly at church. The careless were awakened to seriousness, bad men became good, and good men better. He had no sooner awakened a personal interest in the church itself, than he began to lead on to higher and better things. Those who had never been baptised were persuaded to become so. Large numbers, both old and young, presented themselves for confirmation; and thus the number of church members

increased rapidly, year by year. Then the Sunday schools and night-schools wanted teachers, the choir wanted voices, the church wanted helpers, so those who were willing to work soon had something to do, which gave them a personal interest in the prosperity and progress of the church. He was also an excellent judge of character, and so the right men were put in the right place, the square man into the square hole, and the round man into the round hole. The Sunday Schools and night-schools got in time a numerous and efficient staff of teachers, young men, who were well educated themselves, and had, therefore, something to impart to others, and scholars multiplied exceedingly. Some of the most beautiful hymns and tunes which are now sung in the church, were first learned and sung in the schools by the scholars. The girls used to bring their work, and during the long Winter nights, when the wind whistled cold and drearily enough outside, were first heard those cheering and beautiful hymns and carols—

“ Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,”

“ Once in royal David’s city,”

and others which almost every child in the town can now sing, and which are household words. The new clergyman had a fine ear for music, and a practical and theoretical knowledge of it, rarely to be met with in amateurs. The choir soon saw he knew a deal more of their art than they did themselves, and submitted cheerfully to his instructions. The organist found that the new parson could play the organ better than he could himself, and was therefore glad to hand over the choir entirely into his hands. The organ was improved and enlarged, and thus was laid the foundation of that splendid choir, which even yet bears the mark of his superior training. The old church itself took another lease of life, and brightened up exceedingly. The paper suddenly disappeared, and in its place the walls were decently coloured and marked out in stones, and the church was regularly kept as clean and sweet as possible under the circumstances.

I have said the congregations began rapidly to increase, and the religious feeling in the church to deepen and expand. But the attraction was not the church, certainly not; neither was it the choir or the organ; neither was it that the church had become a fashionable resort. No, it was the power of the gospel, which was preached Sunday after Sunday with an ability and earnestness, with a sincerity and oneness of purpose, with a depth of sentiment, and wealth of illustration which drew people, in spite of themselves, to acknowledge the beauty of holiness, and to a better and nobler life. So thoroughly even in the smallest matters did the new clergyman act up to his profession, that he was a walking advertisement for the gospel he preached. So completely did his preaching seem to have but one aim, that of making people better. So attractive and beautiful was religion presented to them, so plainly and simply was their duty laid before them, and so impressively and eloquently was it urged home, that no wonder people came to church; the wonder would have been if they had stayed away. No wonder the congregation grew larger and larger; no wonder the religious tone of the town was raised and purified; no wonder that the old church grew too little; no wonder the love and affection for the church grew so large, that they were determined to build a larger and nobler edifice, and thus shew by their deeds what great things God had done for them; no wonder that the edifice was raised free from debt, a noble testimony to the abilities and earnestness of one man, and a people's love for their church and their God.

Though in speaking of Bramley New Church, it is difficult, in one sense, to call it anybody's church but Mr. Joy's church, yet it would be unfair not to acknowledge the valuable services of others scarcely less worthy. Soon after Mr. Joy's appointment to the living he found an able and valuable assistant in his labours, in the person of that estimable and worthy gentleman Mr. Rogers, who I am sure will pardon any inadvertence which I may have committed, in my zeal for one whose abilities and worth he himself had such an ardent and

lively appreciation. Fellow-students together at Sheffield, agreeing admirably in their tastes and religious views, they became fellow-workers together in raising the church in Bramley to that position which it is hoped she may ever retain, though it is too much to hope that she may ever surpass it. While speaking of Mr. Joy's assistants, let me not omit, above all things, to remind the people of Bramley what they owe to the kindness, the sympathy, the sisterly affection and love, and more than all, to the bright example of that true and thorough lady—Mrs. Joy. No tinsel, no shoddy, fellow churchmen and churchwomen, about this woman. No flaunting, flirting, frivolous parson's wife this. No pleasure seeker, and pleasure lover, that it is hard to say whether the love of this world, or the hope of the next, has the predominance. A true and noble woman in every sense of the word, and a model pastor's wife, she won and will ever retain the respect and esteem of all who knew her. Neither were their private virtues less worthy of admiration and esteem. Learned, accomplished, and elegant in the truest sense; free, easy, and approachable in their manners and conversation, to know them was, as Congreve said of Lady Elizabeth Hastings, "a liberal education."

But to return to the church. Rome was not built in a day, neither was Bramley New Church. For three long weary years it dragged along, during which time the schools were temporally adapted for the double purpose of schools and church. No one who did not take an active part in the labour which this church cost to erect, can conceive of the care and anxiety, the annoyance and irritation, the abuse and insults, which the clergy, and especially Mr. Joy, were the patient bearers. As is usual in such projects, those who had the most impudence and effrontery, the greatest amount of ignorance and incapacity, took upon themselves the supreme direction of affairs. Men whose notoriety for meddling and muddling, for mismanaging everything with which they were intrusted had been confirmed by the experience of years; and men whose ignorance of the church was only exceeded by their own vulgarity now took it upon them-

selves to instruct the two boy clergymen and the other novices on the committee, how to build the church. Of course the Incumbent being only a boy, and therefore unable to manage his own business, was to have no voice in the matter at all, but quietly acquiesce in everything that was done, and kiss the toes of those who did it. Thus the only man on the committee who had a thorough knowledge of the church, whose taste and judgment was unquestionable; the man who alone of all others knew what wanted doing, and how to do it, was to be put on one side, to be treated with contempt, to be insulted and abused, trod upon and cowed by a parcel of bullies and numskulls, who in qualities of head and heart were as babes, and who in the matter of real respectability, were not fit to black his boots. But perhaps the hardest thing of all to bear, was the desertion of his own friends, who all forsook him and fled, disgusted with the whole thing, and thus the clergy were left to fight their battles with these men singlehanded and alone. Every change and improvement, both in the building and in the service which the clergy proposed, was denounced as a popish superstition or ceremony. One gentleman objected to a musical service because "he did'n't want t'organ sayin' t'prayers," on another occasion he objected to stalls, because the seats and backs were so low, and finished a majestic and brilliant peroration against stalls in the church, by saying it would be like "leuking daan a cloise," and with a whirl of his stick he sat down, amidst the overpowering effects of his own eloquence. When the question of a gallery or no gallery was discussed, it was decided the church would be popish without one, and thus a church which in some respects is an honor to the town and a credit to all who had anything to do with its erection, is to this day encumbered and deformed by a gallery, which to say the least ought to have been put in by the party who proposed it, at their own cost, and with wood out of their own heads. We believe the clergy finally gave way on this point, as without a gallery, they saw they would not be able to provide the necessary number of free sittings which their grant required of them.

The situation of the organ in the chancel was objected to, on the same ground, that it was popish, but the donor settled the matter very promptly by declaring that no organ of his should ever be put into the gallery.

It is astonishing how persons who ought to be better informed still raise this cry of popery at every addition and improvement that is made either in the church or her services.

Those who have been in Roman Catholic Churches, either here, or in other countries, must have observed that they invariably contain galleries, and that the organ is always placed in them, so that the absence of a gallery in a church is no sign of popish pretensions. The cry of popery was again raised at the introduction of the offertory, while the fact is, that the offertory is essentially a protestant service, and has no existence whatever in the Romish Church. As to whether bags or boxes are the most orthodox receptacles for the alms of the congregation, I think is immaterial, so long as they are well lined every Sunday. If those who cavil so much about the bags and put so little into them, would cavil less and give more, and take as much pains to make things agreeable in the church, as they do to make things extremely disagreeable, one cannot help thinking it would look much better, both for themselves and the church.

And now, having thus briefly reviewed to the best of our recollection, the past history of the church for a period of about twenty years, we will just glance at the present position and prospects of the church in this town: and let me once more impress upon the clergy, that these remarks are not dictated from any malice or ill-will entertained against either the church or her ministers, but from a sincere desire for their welfare, by pointing out in what respect we consider they have failed in their duty to this parish; and by correcting, if possible, follies and errors of conduct and judgment which have long been observed and freely talked about by many sincere and honest members of their congregation.

You had a fair start given you in a handsome church, a choir and organ in splendid condition and training, a large,

enthusiastic, and earnest congregation ; and besides all this, a right honest, joyous, welcome in our midst. I may say with truth and confidence, without flattery, and without a fear of contradiction, that there were not many who were not glad and satisfied in the highest degree to hear that our late Incumbent had secured the services of such an able, and zealous, and in every respect, worthy successor in the ministry of the parish. The name itself would have been sufficient for the Bramley people to know that the right man was coming to the right place. Many persons were talked of at the time, to whom it was likely the living would be offered, not total strangers to the people of Bramley, and who had reputation and talents of no mean order to recommend them, but when it was known who had really accepted the living, and under what circumstances it had been accepted, the appointment was looked upon as exceedingly wise and opportune. It was felt on all hands that no ordinary person could come after Mr. Joy without great injury to the parish and to the cause of the church, and thus people hailed with delight and satisfaction the advent of a man so eminently qualified, both worldly and spiritually, to keep up the dignity and position of the church and to carry on the work which had dropped from the hands of him who could hold it no longer. Nor has their confidence been misplaced or their expectations in the main unrealized. There is an energy and business-like tact displayed in carrying on the work of the parish, and in grappling with the difficulties of the situation which has never seemed to flag from the time he first set his foot in Bramley to the present moment, and which has certainly deserved and gained for him the hearty support and co-operation, as well as good opinion of all classes of his parishioners. But this very energetic and business-like quality of character has led him into what seems to us many mistakes and incongruities, which had it been better directed and controlled, would most probably have been avoided.

In the first place, he has attempted too much, to use a homely phrase, he has had "too many irons in the fire,"

to be able to give that attention to them which each has required, and thus a many of his plans and schemes though admirable in themselves have been total failures, or at best only partial successes. For instance, the Sunday Schools under Mr. Joy's management were in our opinion, and we speak from actual observation and experience, much greater instruments of good to the young than they are at present, and yet Mr. Joy's plan was woefully deficient compared with Mr. Gott's, but inasmuch as Mr. Joy's plan was thoroughly well worked and executed, and Mr. Gott's plan, though excellent, is and always has been inefficiently and negligently worked out, so the actual amount of good done bears no proportion to the excellence of the system. But you say, "Look what our system has done for us, look at the number of our scholars, and the accomodation in our schools." To this I reply, that size is no sign of excellence, any more than popularity is, and remember there are five clergy now where there used to be only two. Then look at the discipline now, compared with what it was then. Your schools are like bear gardens, and as noisy as Bedlam. The mistake was made at the first, in not working along with your teachers and superintendents, until the plan was thoroughly understood and applied, and in good working order. The plan was delivered in all its completeness to the superintendents and teachers, but they were comparatively left to themselves Sunday after Sunday to make the best of it they could. When a manufacturer gets a piece of new machinery into his mill, however excellent its construction may be, he does not expect it to go of itself, neither does he leave it to his overlookers to get into working order, but works at it and attends it himself and never leaves it until he sees it doing its work properly. Take again the week-night services, which are no doubt excellent means of grace in their way, but if you wish them to be appreciated by your flock, let it be seen that you appreciate them yourselves by attending them regularly, and don't let a dinner-party, or a concert, or any other trifle put you off, when other people are denying themselves of greater things than

these to come. And more than all, keep your dinner-parties to themselves, and don't mix them up with your church duties. Don't come rushing into the vestry ten minutes after time, in your dress coats and ball dresses, smelling like a dram shop. People notice these things and talk about them. A commercial man knows better than to go about his business smelling of liquor and tobacco, his customers would not like it, and so he leaves his toddy and his pipe until evening. And if it is necessary and expedient for a man of the world always to appear at his business sweet and soberly, how much more is it so for the Ambassadors of Christ. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Take again the Church Institute, how many things have been got up in connection with this, and how few there are which have really come to anything; cricket clubs, lectures, concerts, singing classes, drawing classes, arithmetical classes, church history classes, penny readings, discussion classes, &c. Then again look at the number of societies there are in connection with the church itself, included under the term church helpers: tract distributors, district visitors, mothers meetings, church councils, christian fellowship meetings, communicants' preparations, Wednesday evening choirs, &c., all doing a little good probably, but yet struggling on for a mere existence. How much better to have only half the number, and thoroughly and efficiently worked, to have your energies and attention concentrated on a few things, rather than divided among so many. Where the clergy of the parish have missed their way, has been in aiming at too much; if they had attempted less and done it better, we cannot but think they would have accomplished more for the cause of Christ. They have worked like horses. and in some respects too much like horses, as though they had so much work to do, and must do it, whether the work was worth anything or not; working for mere work's sake, from a sense of duty, rather than as a privilege. About such work there is too much of the "muck rake" visible, and too little of the "glittering

crown." It may fill your Sunday schools and day schools with scholars, it may even build new churches, and fill them with artificial congregations; but it does little by itself for the spiritual progress of the church, and for winning souls to Christ.

There are means of grace, and vehicles for communicating good to the souls of men, far more effectual than Sunday schools and Bible classes, house to house visitation, and mothers' meetings, and which seem to us to be shamefully neglected, and most inefficiently employed. Perhaps there is no method by which men can be turned from the error of their ways, and souls converted to Christ more effectually than by preaching. Perhaps there is nothing more effectual for turning the wavering, strengthening the weak, and confirming the good, than by a good heart-felt, soul-stirring sermon. And now clergy of Bramley, how many such sermons have you preached in Bramley church? I have heard most of them, and think I could count them all on my fingers, which have in any wise approached to this excellence. I must tell you, and the great majority of your congregation, if they opened their minds as freely to you as they do to one another, would tell you, that a more worthless, weak, wishy-washy, empty, lifeless lot of sermons, it is impossible to conceive. How men, professedly learned, who have received University educations, who must have heard good preaching, who profess to be preachers themselves, can get up into the pulpit Sunday after Sunday, and preach sermons so utterly worthless, bad in construction, in style, and matter and execution, I cannot understand. It is certainly, no severe criticism to say they might have been written by your own Sunday scholars, and that without any of them having any cause to feel themselves flattered. With one or two exceptions, the Vicar's extemporaneous discourses on Sunday evenings, are perhaps, the worst of all; at any rate, they are only excelled in this respect by the extempore twiddle-twaddle of the vicar of Hough-End. His written sermons on Sunday mornings, are on the other hand, exceptionally vigorous, manly, and healthful, both in style and thought, and are in strange contrast with the childish nonsense, the bombastic, inflated style,

and the weak, puny, poverty-stricken language of his evening sermons. Yet, even in these there is evidence of some thought, and occasionally an idea will come tumbling out, bristling with truth and point, but such a little ragged, uncouth urchin, that one can hardly take kindly to it. Extempore preaching is certainly not his *forte*. If he could only see and feel the utter weariness of some members of his congregation, after a sermon of this sort on a Sunday evening, his own kindness and benevolence of disposition would spare them another infliction of the same kind. And as to the poor creatures at the Hough End, how they can sit and listen and profit by such discourses as they are favoured with is a mystery as difficult to explain as the sermons themselves, which defy both competition and comprehension. If our clergy don't know what good preaching is, let them go to the Leeds Parish Church and hear Dr. Woodford a few times, and then compare their feeble attempts with his, or let them borrow an armful of Mr. Joy's sermons, which I will venture to say are at this distance of time fresher in the memories of those who heard them than the Vicar's last discourse. Where all was so good it is difficult to make choice, besides particular sermons would no doubt fit particular persons' wants and cases, and thus would appear doubly excellent to them, but I would particularly mention for their perusal "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," preached in the old church at the time Hunt's great picture, "The Light of the World," was drawing thousands to see it; also that beautiful sermon on the "one hundred and fourth psalm," preached in the schools while the church was still in progress, and in which the little carved bird over the pulpit sang so sweetly; also the sermon from "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house;" and that magnificent discourse upon the decree of King Darius, in which the life of Daniel was so eloquently and impressively laid before us. The mere mention of these texts are sufficient not only to recall the sermons themselves, but the impression they made on those who heard them. They were sermons worthy to be printed in letters of gold. To those who heard them with a

hearing ear, and an understanding heart, (not mind,) they were indeed the words of eternal life, and even as mere mental pleasures—the lowest view of preaching—they were like flowers scattered on the “Pathway of Safety.”

We are well aware, that after all, the fault may lie in ourselves. Perhaps we have not attained to that standard of mental and moral excellence, requisite fully to appreciate our clergy's discourses. Perhaps we are like the old woman, who, when asked how she had liked the preacher to-night, exclaimed, “Better and better; I never heard such preaching in my life before; I could'n't understand him.” Whether our clergy have no time to prepare their sermons, or whether it is the result of carelessness, or whatever it is, for the sake of goodness, do let us have an improvement in this respect. If you have no time to prepare sermons, try to make it; give up some other work which is less important. Consider the influence of a forcible telling sermon on the hearts and lives of your congregation. Before there can be amendment, there must be conviction. Before people can be good, they must know and feel they are bad; before they can aspire to be saints, they must be shewn to be sinners. Mrs. Browning somewhere says, I think it is in “Aurora Leigh,” “it takes a soul to move a body;” if so, what must it take to move a soul? Surely something better than a weak feeble sermon. Our clergy seem to take for granted that their congregations are about as good as they need be, at any rate that they are composed of very good sort of people, who only want a little advice and a few directions now and again, and all will be right with them. But common sense, as well as the dictates of conscience, tell us this easy-going religion will not do. If people could get to heaven in this easy-going manner, there would be so many on the way, that the road (which is proverbially narrow) would have had to be widened long since to accommodate them. My opinion of Bramley Church congregation at the present time, is, that in the main it is utterly vain and frivolous, worldly and deceitful, that their religion is only skin deep, and is taken off and put on like their Sunday

clothes; that their church going is a sham, that they are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." People go because it is a grand assembly room, where everybody can see everybody else, shew their own wares, and look at other people's. It is well known that dressmakers and milliners go to Bramley church, like their wealthier and more prosperous brethren go to Paris, for no other purpose than to study the fashions, to see what the prevailing type of bonnet is, and to take patterns of dress trimmings. Those who should set a better example seem to take the lead in this show and extravagance, go about dressed like show-women, with anybody but their own husbands, giggling and flirting like young girls in want of partners, to the admiration and envy of every power-loom weaver in the town, who imitate their examples to such perfection, that it is difficult to tell one from the other. Thus have the Sunday schools and church grown to be more like the entrances to Vanity Fair, than the "gates of Heaven."

Clergy of Bramley! This is a grave charge, but one which we believe to be true, or we should not have made it. There was a time when Bramley church had other attractions than these. Strangers have come from far and near to hear the gospel preached from that pulpit, and have gone to their homes wiser and better men. Strangers come from far and near yet, for Bramley church is still as attractive as ever—but in another way. If our clergy would take as much pains to discourse as eloquently from the pulpit as our organist does upon his instrument, strangers might come to Bramley church with more profit and pleasure than ever. To a person capable of appreciating good music, the services of Bramley Church must be a rare treat and aid to devotion. We cannot too highly extol the abilities and the earnest endeavour on the part of the organist, to make his music worthy of the place and the cause in which it is employed. Would that our clergy would show equal diligence and care in the preparation of their discourses. Those who heard the two services on Bramley Feast Sunday, must have been struck with the inspiring grandeur of the music, and we must acknowledge

the sermons were worthy to bear it company. It is difficult to say who was the most eloquent, Mendelssohn or the Vicar, Dr. Wesley or Mr. Temple, Mr. Hird or the choir. Let us hope they were as profitable as they were pleasing.

We have now said all, and more than we ever intended saying. We have been plain, straightforward, and candid. We have glossed over no error, nor concealed any folly. It was no part of our plan to enlarge on the excellences of our clergy, as they are patent to all. We have told what we believe to be the plain truth. We have expressed no opinion but what we believe many will fully endorse, and we now leave them to the consideration of those whom they may concern, and the result to Him to whom all hearts are open, and to whom all judgment belongeth.

AUGUST 10TH, 1871.

